



2025  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

BREAKTHROUGH  
INSTITUTE

# A NEW ERA

The end of the Biden Administration marked the end of an era. The long effort to center climate change as the organizing principle for Democratic energy and economic policy collapsed under the weight of inflation, polarization, and proceduralism. In its place has risen a nascent bipartisan consensus focused on affordability, regulatory reform, nuclear energy, and all-of-the-above energy abundance.

Each of these ascendent priorities comports with themes that the Breakthrough Institute has long expounded. We were among the first civil society advocates in the US and globally to make the case for cheap, abundant energy, to recognize nuclear power as an essential climate solution, and to understand that deregulation held the key to many important environmental outcomes.

As a result, Breakthrough is far better positioned for the current moment and the second Trump administration than most environmental and clean energy advocates. This has enabled us to effectively defend public investment in energy innovation and clean baseload power in the Big Beautiful Bill, to shape nuclear policy at the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and to inform both parties' policy priorities amid ongoing congressional permitting reform negotiations. More broadly, as the lead organizers of this fall's Abundance 2025 conference, we've played an outsized role in birthing a new cross-partisan energy politics for the post-climate era.

Over twenty years after the publication of the "The Death of Environmentalism," what was once prophecy has largely come to pass. The legacy environmental movement is a shell of its former self, still capable of obstruction but intellectually exhausted and politically impotent. The folly of apocalyptic messages and the politics of limits is now undeniable. Love or hate the Trump administration, it is serious about unleashing America's promethean possibilities in a way that no U.S. administration of recent memory compares. Democrats, too, increasingly recognize this imperative. America will build again or it will die.

Now, though, is not the time for a victory lap. This decade offers a generational opportunity to remake 50 years of environmental law and policy, to relaunch a globally competitive American nuclear industry, and to build a new ecomodernist politics of abundance for the 21st century. The signs all augur well and we remain grateful for the enduring support of our donors and allies. But there is much work still to do.

**Ted Nordhaus**, Executive Director

**Alex Trembath**, Deputy Director



# NUCLEAR ENERGY INNOVATION

The Breakthrough Institute remains the leading advocate for modernizing American nuclear energy policy; commercializing next-generation reactors; and expanding commercial nuclear power capacity, fuel enrichment, and industrial supply chains.

Our Nuclear Energy Innovation team continues to apply our strategy of identifying systemic barriers to nuclear technologies, conducting rigorous analyses, and providing actionable, evidence-based recommendations to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the Department of Energy (DOE), Congress, state officials, and the broader stakeholder community. This approach enables us to identify root challenges that often go unaddressed, and advance reforms that facilitate meaningful progress toward nuclear energy commercialization. Our team's consistent presence and technical leadership make us one of the most trusted independent voices in nuclear policy, as evidenced by the ongoing collaborations we have with senior decision-makers at the NRC, DOE, and several congressional offices and committees.

## REGULATORY ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

As of October, Breakthrough's nuclear team has participated in over 150 NRC meetings in 2025, including every meeting on the ADVANCE Act and the White House's Executive Orders on nuclear policy, and provided comments in the majority of these meetings. No other organization comes close to this level of regulatory engagement. We have received multiple commendations from many NRC staff and even commissioners for our constructive contributions.

Our comments and white papers have directly influenced the NRC's mission statement revision, improved licensing efficiency provisions, and secured appropriate fee reductions for advanced reactors. Breakthrough's letters on the ADVANCE Act were included in reports to Congress, and our team was invited to present to NRC leadership on radiation standards and the use of the linear no-threshold (LNT) model. We also provided direct input on harmonizing EPA and NRC approaches to radiological risk, aligning with recent White House executive orders.

The Part 53 licensing framework for advanced reactors also remained a focus in 2025. Following substantial engagement with NRC staff and other advocates throughout 2024, we hosted a Part 53 workshop earlier this year and delivered a comprehensive multi-stakeholder consensus comment, which was endorsed by more than 10 organizations. The nuclear team also submitted a detailed independent comment and continues to advocate for a risk-informed, performance-based framework for advanced reactors.

The NRC is currently reconsidering all regulations, as required by Executive Order 14300. Without a vision for the intended outcome, piecemeal changes can create new problems. We are finalizing our comprehensive "Vision for the NRC" framework to help guide this process.



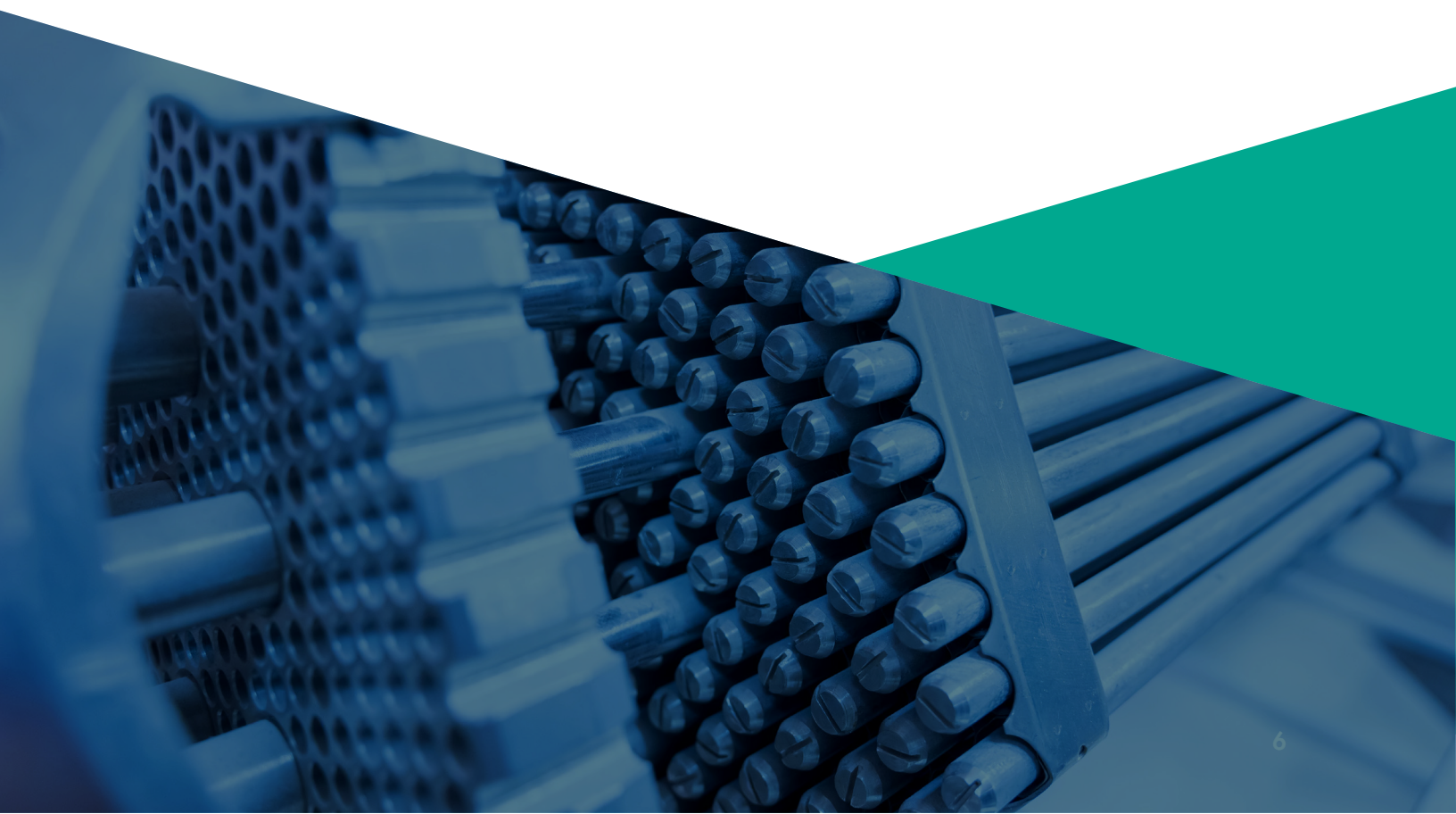
## RESEARCH AND POLICY LEADERSHIP

On-time completion of nuclear power projects and mitigating the risk of cost overruns remain key concerns for potential buyers, investors, and utility regulators. In July, we published our [\*Accelerating Commercialization Through Incentivizing On-Time Nuclear \(ACTION\)\*](#) report that proposed a novel milestone-based financing framework to promote on-time, on-budget deployment. ACTION has received significant interest from Congressional offices, state officials, and industry leaders. In November, we released [\*Abundant Fuel for Abundant Reactors\*](#), a report which demonstrated the need for and policy recommendations to scale-up uranium enrichment capacity in the United States to meet the fuel requirements of a nuclear-powered future. In 2026, the nuclear team will publish comprehensive roadmaps for building nuclear order books, overcoming deployment barriers, and advancing industrial heat applications.

Our analysis of the DOE's Reactor Pilot Program explored how targeted demonstrations can strengthen investor and regulatory confidence. Our grid and infrastructure research revealed how outdated governance is constraining clean energy growth. Our New York Times-featured work on China's nuclear expansion underscored the value of predictable licensing, low-rate financing, and standardized construction for U.S. deployment. Additional analyses called for streamlining environmental reviews, improving NRC commissioner vote efficiency, and developing orderbook strategies to scale reactor commercialization.

The nuclear team also engaged stakeholders through the Western Governors Association Energy Superabundance Conference, the annual American Nuclear Society conference, the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO) Advanced Nuclear First Mover Initiative, the Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium, and the Power Users Annual Conference. These programs and events have created momentum towards establishing a sustainable regulatory and industry ecosystem for nuclear buildout. Staying engaged with academic and professional societies—such as the National Academies, the Health Physics Society, IAEA, and the Roots of Progress fellowship community—has also helped to create visibility for our solutions-based proposals among high-impact decision-makers.

After years of decline, nuclear energy—the canonical ecomodernist technology—now exemplifies the ambitions of the emergent abundance movement, and is a priority for the Trump Administration and both parties in Congress. The Breakthrough Institute has helped change the entire public debate about nuclear over the last fifteen years, and we continue to lead the conversation about practical policy to reinvigorate the American and global nuclear sectors.





# ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY REFORM

In 2025, Breakthrough rose as a leader in the permitting reform conversation. We began the year with a major project documenting the causes and effects of litigation delay under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In the short time since, the team quickly evolved into a broader operation to modernize environmental review and permitting across the federal government. The program now focuses not only on how procedural law shapes real-world outcomes, but also on developing policy solutions that can fix it, and on strategic engagement with lawmakers and congressional staff to execute these solutions.



MARC LEVITT

This summer, Breakthrough welcomed Marc Levitt as our new Director of Environmental Regulatory Reform. Marc brings extensive legal, policy, and political expertise. As an appointee in the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation and Office of Policy during the Biden administration, Marc led efforts to implement the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Marc worked on a range of environmental laws and developed a network to match the prominence of his prior role. Also, as a former environmental attorney, Marc brings a practitioner's perspective often missing from the permitting reform debate.



For the last several years, Breakthrough's analyst Elizabeth McCarthy has shepherded our extensive research on NEPA litigation at the district and appellate level. This year Marc and Elizabeth's combined efforts dramatically increased Breakthrough's capacity for research, writing, and Hill engagement.

Building on our 2024 flagship report, [Understanding NEPA Litigation](#), this year we released an expanded analysis, [The Procedural Hangover](#), alongside an open-source [Navigating NEPA](#) database. Together, these tools offer a detailed and accessible view of how litigation shapes federal permitting. The findings have been cited multiple times in House Natural Resources Committee Hearings as lawmakers debated how to modernize environmental review. Members from both parties used our data to explain how lawsuits have become one of the biggest drivers of project delay and cost overruns.

At this year's Abundance conference, our team convened the Permitting War Room, bringing together Hill staff, agency officials, policy experts, and industry leaders for a candid discussion about where progress is most achievable. The session surfaced unexpected points of consensus on data transparency and timelines that will help to frame the reform agenda in 2026.

In October, Marc Levitt published "[Reboot NEPA](#)," a comprehensive reform agenda that goes beyond marginal fixes and addresses pitfalls that would be associated with full repeal of the law.

Coverage in [Heatmap \(twice\)](#), [Inside EPA](#), and [Bond Buyer Media](#) show the impact of our research in the broader policy debate. Breakthrough's staff published on the imperative to reform federal permitting regulations in the Boston Globe, City Journal, The Dispatch, along with commentary in other leading media outlets.

Our NEPA reform proposal, our litigation research, and our regulatory reform team's expertise in policy and legal permitting administration, have made Breakthrough an analytical and political asset for offices writing permitting legislation in Congress. As the year comes to a close, Breakthrough's regulatory reform team is actively analyzing and giving shape to ongoing permitting negotiations over the SPEED Act, the ePermit Act, the Fix Our Forests Act, and more.



# 2025 ABUNDANCE CONFERENCE

After launching the Abundance conference with Inclusive Abundance in 2024, the Breakthrough Institute took over as lead organizer for Abundance 2025. The event was a remarkable success. Bringing together 25 partner organizations and over six hundred participants, Abundance 2025 showcased a still-emerging but verifiably forceful social-intellectual movement.

Abundance is arguably the most significant political and creative development in American political culture this generation. The coalition brings together activists, intellectuals, philanthropists, and other professionals from across the political spectrum and with a variety of expertises and backgrounds. The ideas within abundance have given new shape to the intra-Democratic Party debates over policy and political priority, while forging new cross-partisan alliances on permitting reform, nuclear energy, artificial intelligence, immigration, family policy, health care, and beyond. Abundance has taken root at the state, local, and community level, with new groups like the Abundance Elected Network and Students for Abundance.



This year's conference was co-chaired by the Recoding America Fund's Jennifer Pahlka and the Foundation for American Innovation's Zach Graves, and emceed by the Niskanen Center's Marshall Kosloff. Speakers included John Arnold, Reihan Salam, Jerusalem Demsas, Ezra Klein, Derek Thompson, David Brooks, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, Representatives Scott Peters and Brett Guthrie, California Senator Scott Wiener, and the Breakthrough Institute's Alex Trembath, Ted Nordhaus, and Marc Levitt.

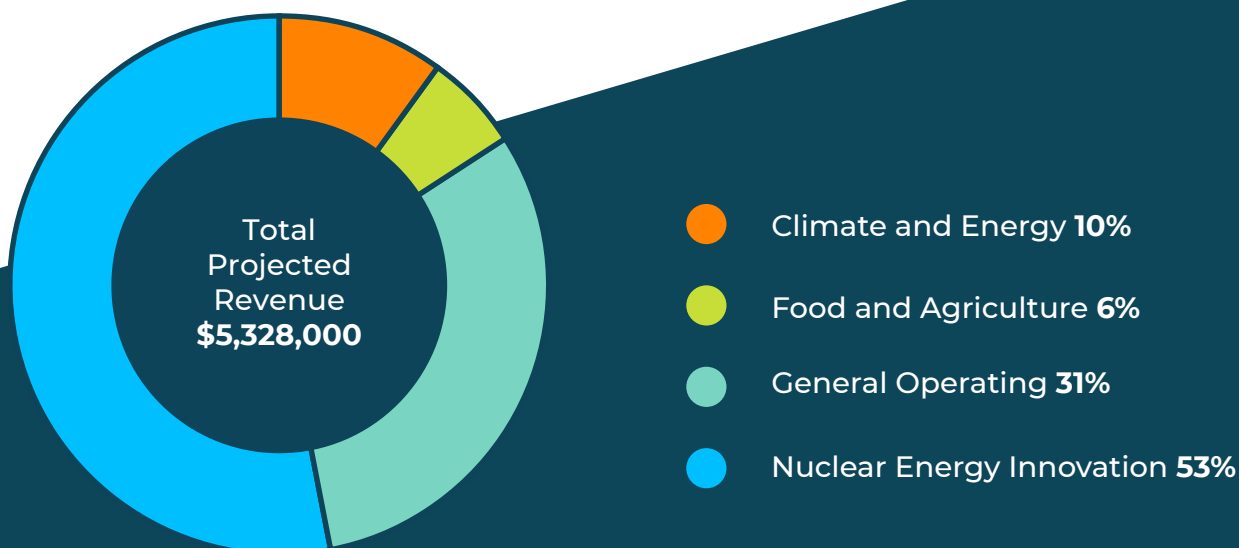
This year's conference was covered by Axios, Semafor, the Liberal Patriot, The Argument, Matt Yglesias's Slow Boring newsletter, and other media outlets. Breakthrough's Alex Trembath was featured on the Infill Podcast, the Free the Economy podcast, the All Things in Moderation newsletter, and other leading abundance outlets discussing the event.

The Breakthrough Institute predates the abundance movement, having created a new environmental politics that builds, and has spent fifteen years hosting, analyzing, shaping, and advancing emergent social intellectual movements including ecomodernism and the pro-nuclear coalition. As Steve Teles wrote in his "Varieties of Abundance" essay that was prominently featured at this year's conference, "The Breakthrough Institute's 'Ecomodernism' is unquestionably part of Abundance, but it appears through its influence at almost every place along the Abundance spectrum, from Cascadian industrial policy advocates to Dark Abundance supporters of energy super-abundance." We have been uniquely positioned, given our ideologically unclassifiable foundations and our commitment to open, honest discourse, to help convene the still-emerging abundance movement.

We at Breakthrough look forward to building the future of the Abundance conference, and shaping the broader movement, for years to come.

## FUNDING

The figures below are preliminary based on contributions already received as well as contributions expected through December 31. Breakthrough is projected to raise over \$5.3 million by year end. Nuclear Energy Innovation received the largest share of targeted grants at 53%, underscoring our urgent work to advance transformative nuclear solutions. Our Food and Agriculture funding was reduced by over 70% as the result of shifting priorities in philanthropy and the closure of one of our major agriculture program supporters. We continue to be fortunate to have received 31% of our total funding as general operating support, consistent with the previous year, enabling Breakthrough to allocate funding as needed and thus providing us a reasonable level of programmatic flexibility.



## OUR SUPPORTERS

As an honest broker dedicated to the public interest, the Breakthrough Institute accepts charitable contributions only from people and institutions without a financial interest in our work. Thank you to the major donors who have given Breakthrough at least \$5,000 over the past year:

**Alex C. Walker Educational and Charitable Foundation**  
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Thank you as well to the co-hosts and sponsors of [Abundance 2025](#).